DIRECTIONS
OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Concerning

Secret and Private VVORSHIP, and mutuall edification, for cherishing Piety, for maintaining Unity, and avoiding Schisme and Division.

WITH

An Act for observing these Directions, *and for censuring such as use to neglect*

FAMILY VVORSHIP.

AND

An Act against such as withdraw themselves from the Publike Worship in their own

CONGREGATIONS.

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Act for obſerving the following Directions, and for cenſuring ſuch as uſe to neglect Family Worſhip.

THe Generall Aſſembly, after mature deliberation, doth approve the following Rules and Directions, for cheriſhing Piety and preventing diviſion and Schiſme, and doth appoint Miniſters and Ruling Elders in each Congregation, to take ſpeciall care that theſe Directions be obſerved and followed; As likewi'e that Presbyteries and Provinciall Synods enquire and make triall, whether the ſaids Directions be duly obſerved in their bounds, and to reprove or cenſure (according to the quality of the offence) ſuch as ſhall

be found to be reprovable or cenſurable therein. And to the end that theſe Directions may not be rendered ineffectual and unprofitable among ſome through the uſuall neglect of the very ſubſtance of the duty of Family Worſhip, The Aſſembly doth further require and appoint Miniſters and Ruling Elders, to make diligent ſearch & enquiry in the Congregations committed to their charge reſpectively, whether there be among them any Family or Families which uſe to neglect this neceſſary duty; And if any ſuch Family be found, the head of that family is to be firſt admoniſhed privately to amend this fault, And in caſe of his continuiug therein, he is to be gravely and ſadly reproved by the Seſſion. After which reproof, if hee be found ſtill to neglect Family Worſhip, Let him be for his obſtinacy, in ſuch an offence, ſuſpended and debarred from the LORDS Supper, as being juſtly eſteemed unworthy to communicate therein till he amend.

A. Ker.

DIRECTIONS OF THE Generall Assembly, concerning *Secret and Private Worship and* mutuall edification, for the cherishing piety, *for maintaining unity, and avoiding* Schisme and Division.

BEsides the publike Worship in Congregations, mercifully established in this Land, in great purity: It is expedient and necessar, that Secret Worship of each person alone, and Private worship of Families be pressed and set up: That with Nationall Reformation, the profession and power of Godlinesse both Personall and Domestick be advanced.

I. And first for Secret Worship: It is most necessar, that every one apart and by themselves be given to prayer and Meditation, The unspeakable benefit whereof is best known to them who are most exercised therein: This being the mean whereby in a speciall way communion with God is entertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained: And therefore it becometh not only Pastours, within their severall Charges, to presse persons of all sorts to per-

forme this duty Morning and Evening and at other occasions, but also it is incumbent to the head of every Familie, to have a care that both themselves and all within their charge be daily diligent herein.

II. The ordinary duties comprehended under the exercise of Piety, which should be in Familes when they are conveened to that effect, are these: First, Prayer and Praises performed, with a speciall reference as well to the publike condition of the Kirk of GOD and this Kingdom, as to the present case of the Familie, and every member thereof. Next, Reading of Scriptures with Chatechizing in a plain way, that the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the publike Ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the Scriptures when they are read; Together with godly conferences, tending to the edification of all the members in the most holy Faith: As also, admonition and rebuke upon just reasons from these who have Authority in the Familie.

III. As the Charge and Office of interpreting the holy Scriptures, is a part of the Ministeriall Calling, which none (howsoever otherwise qualified) should take upon him in any place, but he that is duely called thereunto by God and his Kirk: So in every Familie where there is any that can read, The holy Scriptures should be read ordinarily to the Family; And it is commendable that thereafter they confer, and by way of conference make some good use of what hath been read and heard: As for example, if any sin be repro-

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ved in the Word read, uſe may be made thereof, to make all the Familie circumſpect and watchfull againſt the ſame; Or, if any judgement be threatned or mentioned to have been inflicted in that portion of Scripture which is read, uſe may be made to make all the Family fear, leſt the ſame or a worſe judgement befall them, unleſſe they beware of the ſin that procured it. And finally, if any duty be required, or comfort held forth in a promiſe, uſe may be made to ſtirre up themſelves to imploy Chriſt for ſtrength to enable them for doing the commanded duty, and to apply the offered comfort: In all which the Maſter of the Family is to have the chief hand; And any member of the Family may propone ane queſtion or doubt for reſolution.

IIII. The head of the Family is to take care that none of the Family withdraw himſelf from any part of Familie-Worſhip: And ſeeing the ordinary performance of all the parts of Family-Worſhip belongeth properly to the Head of the Family; The Miniſter is to ſtirre up ſuch as are laſie, and train up ſuch as are weak, to a fitneſſe for theſe exerciſes. It being alwayes free to perſons of Qualitie to entertain one approuen by the Presbyterie for performing Family exercife; And in other families where the head of the Family is unfit, that another conſtantly reſiding in the Family, approven by the Miniſter and Seſſion, may be imployed in that ſervice; Wherein the Miniſter and Seſſion are to be countable to the Presbyterie. And if a Miniſter by Divine providence be brought to any Familie, it is requiſite, that at no time he conveen a part of the Familie-

lie for Worſhip ſecluding the reſt: Except in ſingular caſes, ſpecially concerning theſe parties, which (in Chriſtian prudence) need not, or ought not to be imparted to others.

V. Let no idler who hath no particular calling, or vagrant perſon under pretence of a calling, be ſuffered to perform Worſhip in Families, to or for the ſame: Seeing perſons tainted with errours or aiming at diviſion, may be ready (after that manner) to creep into houſes and lead captive ſilly and unſtable ſouls.

VI. At Family worſhip a ſpeciall care is to be had, that each Family keep by themſelves: Neither requiring, inviting, nor admitting perſons from divers Families: Unleſſe it bee theſe who are lodged with them or at meal, or otherwiſe with them upon ſome lawfull occaſion.

VII. Whatſoever hath been the effects, and fruits of meetings of perſons of divers Families in the times of corruption or trouble (in which caſes many things are commendable, which otherwiſe are not tollerable) Yet when God hath bleſſed us with peace and the purity of the Goſpel, ſuch meetings of perſons of divers families (except in the caſes mentioned in theſe directi ons) are to be diſaproved, as tending to the hinderance of the Religious exerciſe of each Family by it ſelfe, to the prejudice of the publike Miniſtery, to the renting of the Families of particular Congregations, and (in progreſſe of time) of the whole Kirk: beſides many offences which may come thereby, to the hard-

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ning of the hearts of carnall men, and grief of the godly.

VIII. On the Lords day, after every one of the Family apart, and the whole Family together have sought the Lord (in whose hands the preparation of mens hearts are) to fit them for the publike worship, and to blesse to them the publike Ordinances; The Master of the Family ought to take care that all within his charge repair to the publike Worship, that he and they may joyn with the rest of the Congregation; And, the publike Worship being finished, after prayer, he should take an account what they have heard; And thereafter to spend the rest of the time which they may spare, in Catechising and in spirituall conferences upon the Word of God; Or else (going apart) they ought to apply themselves to reading, meditation, and secret prayer, that they may confirm and increase their communion with God; That so the profit which they found in the publike Ordinances may be cherished and promoved, and they more edified unto eternall life.

IX. So many as can conceive Prayer, ought to make use of that gift of God: Albeit these who are rude and weaker may begin at a set form of Prayer; But so, as they be not sluggish in stirring up in themselves (according to their daily necessities) the spirit of Prayer, which is given to all the children of God in some measure. To which effect, they ought to be the more fervent and frequent in secret Prayer to God, for enabling of their hearts to conceive, and their tongues to

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expreſſe convenient deſires to God for their Family. And in the mean time, for their greater encouragement, let theſe materials of Prayer be meditated upon, and made uſe of, as followeth:

Let them confeſſe to God how unworthy they are to come in his preſence, and how unfit to worſhip his Majeſty; And therefore earneſtly ask of God the ſpirit of Prayer.

They are to confeſſe their ſins, and the ſins of the Family, accuſing, judging, and condemning themſelves for them, till they bring their ſouls to ſome meaſure of true humiliation.

They are to poure out their ſouls to God, in the Name of Chriſt, by the Spirit, for forgiveneſſe of ſins, for Grace to repent, to beleeve, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly; and that they may ſerve God with joy and delight, walking before him.

They are to give thanks to God for his many mercies to his people, and to themſelves, and eſpecially for his love in Chriſt, and for the light of the Goſpel.

They are to pray for ſuch particular benefits, Spirituall and Temporall, as they ſtand in need of for the time, (whether it bee Morning or Evening) as health or ſickneſſe, proſperity or adverſity.

They ought to pray for the Kirk of Chriſt in generall, for all the Reformed Kirks, and for this Kirk in particular, and for all that ſuffer for the Name of Chriſt; for all our Superiours, The Kings Majeſty, the Queen, and their Children, for the Magiſtrates, Miniſters, and whole body of the

the Congregation whereof they are members, as well for their Neighbours absent in their lawfull affairs, as for those that are at home.

The Prayer may be closed with an earnest desire, that God may be glorified in the comming of the Kingdome of his Son, and in the doing of his will; And with assurance that themselves are excepted, and what they have asked according to his will shall be done.

X. These Exercises ought to be performed in great sincerity, without delay, laying aside all exercises of worldly businesse, or hinderances, Notwithstanding the mockings of Atheists, and profane men; In respect of the great mercies of God to this Land, and of his severe Corrections wherewith lately he hath exercised us. And to this effect, persons of eminencie (and all Elders of the Kirk) not only ought to stir up themselves and their Families to diligence herein; But also to concurre effectually, that in all other Families, where they have power and charge, the said Exercises be conscionably performed.

XI. Besides the ordinary duties in families which are abovementioned, extraordinary duties both of humiliation and thanksgiving are to be carefully performed in Families, when the Lord by extraordinary occasions (private or publike) calleth for them.

XII. Seing the Word of God requireth, That we should consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; Therefore, at all times, and specially

in this time wherein prophanity abounds, and mockers, walking after their own lusts, think it strange that others run not with them to the same excesse of riot, every member of this Kirk ought to stir up themselves and one another to the duties of mutuall Edification, by instruction, admonition, rebuke, exhorting one another to manifest the grace of God, in denying ungodlinesse and worldly lusts, and in living godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world, by comforting the feeble minded, and praying with, or, for one another: Which duties respectively are to be performed upon speciall occasions offered by divine providence; As namely, when under any calamity, crosse, or great difficulty, counsell or comfort is sought, Or when an offender is to be reclaimed by private admonition, and if that be not effectuall, by joyning one or two more in the admonition, according to the rule of Christ; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

XIII. And because it is not given to every one to speak a word in season to a wearied or distressed conscience, it is expedient, that a person (in that case) finding no ease after the use of all ordinary means private and publike, have their addresse to their own Pastour, or some experienced Christian: But, if the person troubled in conscience, be of that condition, or of that sex, that discretion, modesty, or fear of scandal, requireth a godly grave and secret friend to be present with them in their said distresse, it is expedient that such a friend be present.

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XIV. When persons of divers Families are brought together by divine providence, being abroad upon their particular Vocations, or any necessary occasions, As they would have the Lord their GOD with them whithersoever they go, they ought to walk with GOD, and not neglect the duties of Prayer and Thanksgiving, but take care that the same be performed by such as the company shall judge fittest: And that they likewise take heed that no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.

The drift & scope of all these Directions is no other but that upon the one part, the power and practise of godlinesse among all the Ministers & Members of this Kirk, according to their severall places and vocations, may bee cherished and advanced, and all impiety and mocking of Religious exercises suppressed: And upon the other part, that under the name and pretext of Religious Exercises, no such meetings or practises be allowed, as are apt to breed errour, scandal, schisme, contempt or mis-regard of the publike Ordinances and Ministers, or neglect of the duties of particular Callings, or such other evils as are the works not of the Spirit but of the Flesh, and are contrary to Truth and Peace.

A. Ker.

Act against such as withdraw themselves from the publike worship in their own Congregation.

SInce it hath pleased GOD of his infinite goodnesse to blesse his Kirk within this Nation, with the riches of the Gospel, in giving to us his Ordinances in great purity, liberty, and withall, a comely and well-eshablished order: The Assembly, in the zeal of God, for preserving Order, Unity and peace in the Kirk, for maintaining that respect which is due to the Ordinances and Ministers of Jesus Christ, for preventing Schisme, noisome Errours, and all unlawfull practises, which may follow on the peoples with-drawing themselves from their own Congregations, Doth charge every Minister to bee diligent in fulfulling his Ministry, to be holy & grave in his conversation, to be faithfull in Preaching, declaring the whole counsel of GOD, and as he hath occasion from the Text of Scripture, to reprove the sins & errours, and presse the duties of the time; & in all those, to observe the rules prescribed by the Acts of Assembly; wherein if he be negligent, he is to be censured by his own Presbytery. As also ordains every member in every congregation, to keep their own

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Paroch Kirk, to communicate therein the V[illegible] Sacraments; And if any perſon or perſons ſhall h[illegible] after uſually abſent themſelves from their own Con-gregations, except in urgent caſes made known to, and approven by the Presbytery, The Miniſters of theſe Congregations whereunto they reſort, ſhall both in publike by preaching, and in private by admonition, ſhew their diſlike of their with-drawing from their own Miniſter; That in ſo doing, They may witneſſe to all that hear them, their due care to ſtrengthen the hands of their fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord, and their deteſtation of any thing that may tend to Separation, or any of the above-mentioned evils: Hereby their own Flock will be confirmed in their ſtedfaſtneſſe, and the unſtable ſpirits of others will be rectified. Like as the Miniſter of that Congregation from which they do withdraw, ſhall labour firſt by private admonition to reclaim them; and if any after private admonition given by their own Paſtor, do not amend, in that caſe the Paſtour ſhall dilate the foreſaid perſons to the Seſſion, who ſhall cite and cenſure them as contemners of the comely order of the Kirk And if the matter be not taken order with there, It is to be brought to the Presbyterie: For the better obſerving whereof, the Presbyteries at the Viſitation of their ſeverall Kirks and Provincial Aſſemblies, in their cenſure of the ſeverall Presbyteries, ſhall inquire hereanent: Which inquiry and report ſhall be regiſtrate in the Provincial Books, that their diligence may be ſeen in the General Aſſembly.

A. Ker.

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